

Engaging Community Capitals

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Community development after conflict often requires varied approaches to development to address the variety of aftermath of conflict. Working in a post-conflict community in Medellín, Colombia, this project sought to explore what community capitals were engaged in community development, and how this is impacted by post-conflict community dynamics.

Purpose: To explore how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work alongside the community to pursue community development in Vereda Granizal, Colombia.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How are community capitals leveraged for NGOs' work in community development efforts?
2. How do local community dynamics impact the work of NGOs in a post-conflict community?

Methodology: 6 NGOs working in Vereda Granizal, Colombia were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Utilizing a multiple-case, comparative study, a cross-case analysis was performed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through two phases of line-by-line coding, the first for each case individually, and the second for a cross-case analysis (Saldaña, 2016).



Map of Vereda Granizal (Ramirez, 2021)

COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

Research was co-created with community leaders around community development in a post-conflict context through the following:

- Interview questions were designed with the help of a local NGO leader engaged in work in the community.
- Questions were also contextualized for a post-conflict context by the help of a researcher also engaging in post-conflict community development work.
- The interview questions were practiced for clarity with this researcher.
- An NGO working in the community helped identify participants for this study.
- Participants were engaged in member-checks to verify the results.
- Results were formatted into a flyer and given to the NGO leaders to highlight how they can continue to integrate valuable assets into their programming.

NGOs' COMMUNITY WORK

NGO leaders selected are all members of Granizal or work closely with grassroots movements in the community with on-the-ground efforts. They engaged with the community in a variety of ways focusing many of their efforts on vulnerable groups like women or children. We found that their engagement was important for the following:

- Trust-building and transparency are crucial for project implementation.
- Adapting their programming to better suit community needs.
- Education is a pathway to engage with the community and promote non-violent missions.
- Violence still impacts the community, but courage and bravery are demonstrated through their resistance and hope forward approach.
- NGOs are learning to coexist with the presence of armed groups, pushing back against violent norms.

COMMUNITY CAPITALS

- Every single NGO utilized community resources, personnel, spaces, and other community capitals to support their projects and community development.
- Social capital, connections to each other and other organizations, was mentioned over 25 times as a beneficial resource.
- Domestic and international volunteers were some of the most helpful resources.
- Safe spaces from violence and armed groups are crucial for successful community engagement.
- Community capitals proved to be instrumental in the ways the NGOs engaged with the community, but also how violence impacts the work they do.

CONCLUSIONS

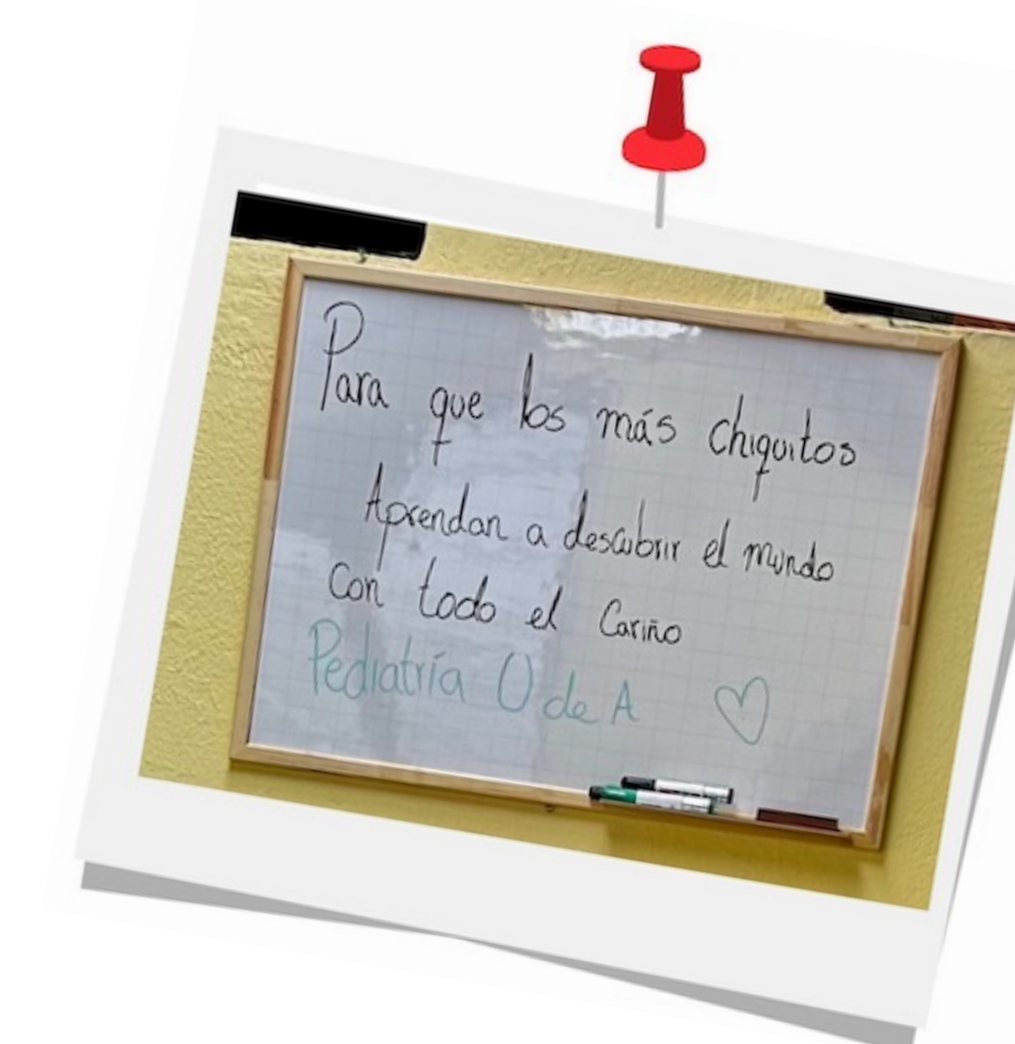
- Post-conflict communities require a different approach to developmental efforts than other communities of interest.
- Local and NGO leaders are critical to establishing transparency and trust in these territories.
- Understanding the post-conflict dynamic can help sustain external engagement from donors.
- Including community members in decision-making processes encourages trust-building and transparency between the NGO leaders and the community.
- Conflict is transformed through spaces of hope, healing, and mourning.
- Children are considered especially important for the future and success of the community.



A typical Colombian community built into the mountainside (Rodríguez, personal communication, 2024).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Co-created scholarship better informs post-conflict dynamics for community development by offering experience and expertise tailored to better suit the community's needs.
- Researchers and university teams have a responsibility to adhere to the resources and capitals most impactful and utilized by the community to implement sustainable projects.
- The community population is rapidly changing with more displaced individuals, and this should be a consideration in their programming.
- Children are vehicles for change for future community development, and therefore, future efforts should prioritize programming for youth.



Message written on a board for the children visiting NGO 1.
Translation: "So the little ones discover a world full of love."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Scan QR code to access the bibliography.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to the community partners whose time, expertise, and partnership made this research possible.